



U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Management Related to Coyotes on National Wildlife Refuges in Rhode Island

Coyotes (*canis latrans*) serve an important role in nature by controlling rodent populations, resident geese, and in some cases the number of deer. As coyote numbers have increased, so too has public concern regarding the well being of their pets and their families. Coyotes occur on all of the National Wildlife Refuges in Rhode Island except Block Island. At Sachuest Point, a study being conducted by the Conservation Agency on Aquidneck Island has shown this refuge lies within the home range of the Peckham Coyote Pack (see map on reverse). This pack appears to feed mainly on deer, voles, and other natural food items, although they also venture near or into developed neighborhoods.

Increasing our Understanding of coyotes

Better understanding coyote populations and how they behave is an important reference point upon which effective management actions can be developed. In 2010, the Refuges provided \$4,500.00 and staff assistance to Dr. Numi Mitchell for a continuing study of Coyotes on Aquidneck Island. This study has yielded important insights into local coyote ecology, and the Refuges will continue to support this effort as resources permit.

Control of non-native food sources

Several studies make it clear, intentional or unintentional feeding of coyotes can make them less afraid of people. We are fortunate to have a cadre of volunteers at the Sachuest Point Refuge who keep trash and garbage in check. We host several shoreline cleanups to keep the shoreline clear of fishing related waste items.

Control of problem coyotes

The Refuge will dispatch any individual coyote which exhibits signs of sickness, and those which do not appear to be afraid of people *and* who may show aggression towards humans. The Refuge will also dispatch individual animals which are predating nests of species protected under the Endangered Species Act such as Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*). The refuge will not accept relocated coyotes because they tend to be problem individuals, high mortality rates of relocated animals, most relocated animals seek to return to where they were trapped, and the potential to disrupt pack organizations and resident coyotes.

Environmental Education

The Refuge has posted several information sources on our websites and visitor centers for people interested in discouraging coyotes near their property; examples of coyote studies and management practices in other communities where coyotes in the urban environment are located; and examples of activities which children can use to become involved in while learning about coyotes.

Management of Native Food Sources

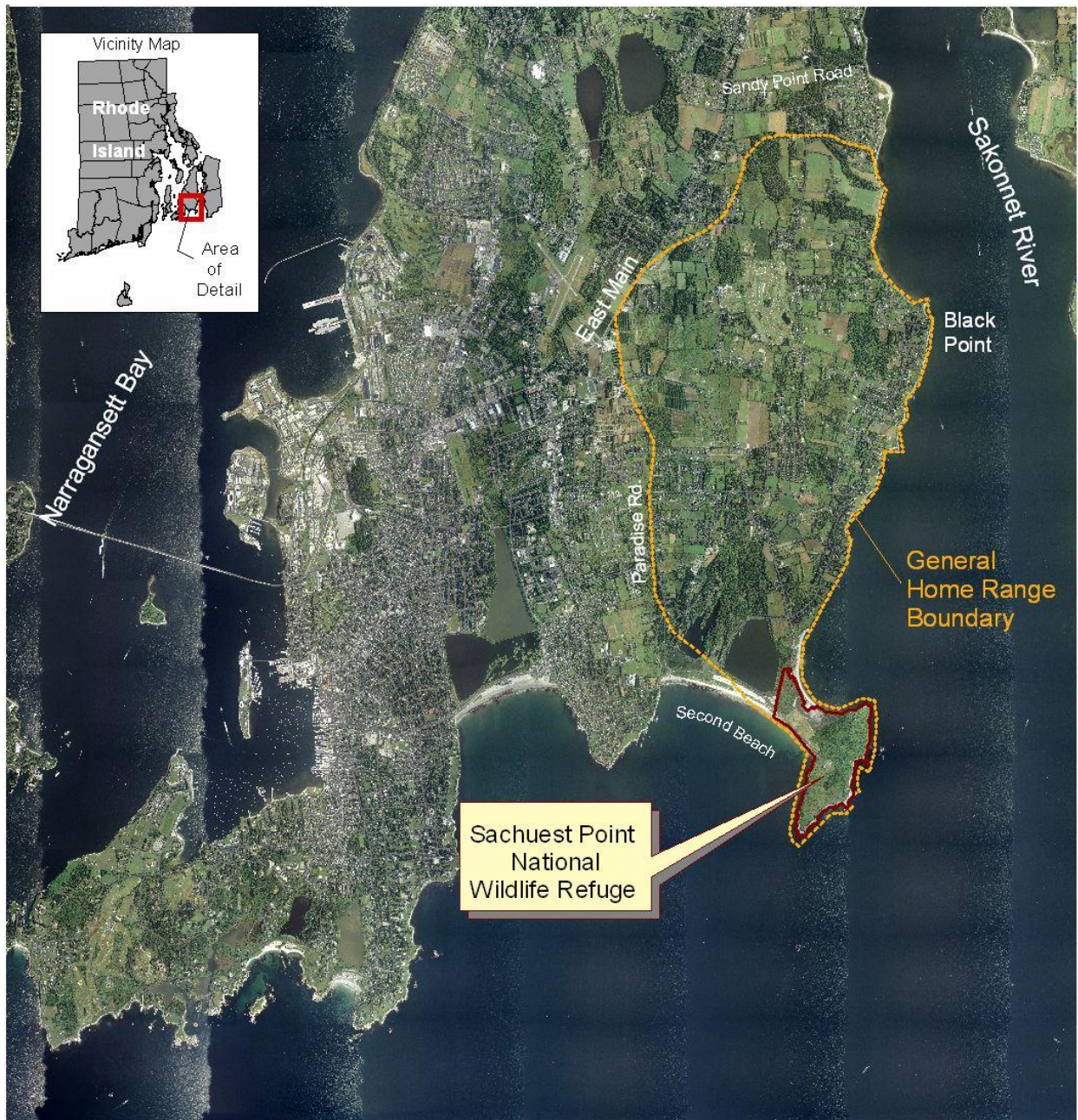
Coyotes are opportunistic feeders and will eat most anything. The Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge has abundant small mammals for coyotes to eat, but also a high density of white tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). A healthy deer herd has many benefits, but an overabundance of deer can place stress on habitats, indirectly cause increased deer/vehicle collisions, and can also support higher coyote populations.

The Refuge Complex has initiated development of Deer Management Plans for both the Ninigret and Block Island National Wildlife Refuges in 2011 to address how deer should be managed, and whether control is needed. Development of Deer Management Plans for the Sachuest Point and John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuges are anticipated to start in 2012.

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Generalized Home Range Map of the Alpha Male and Female Coyotes in April 2010 Using the Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge

Based on data collected by The Conservation Agency as part of their ongoing study of coyotes on Aquidneck Island (<http://www.theconservationagency.org/coyote/html>)



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Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex
50 Bend Road, Charlestown, RI 02813.
Land Lines Approximate, based on RIGIS data.

